

Remarks

Reconsideration of this Application is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 12-14 and 23 are pending in the application, with claim 12 being the independent claim. Claims 1-11 are sought to be cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter therein. Claims 15-22 have been withdrawn pending allowance of a generic linking claim. These changes are believed to introduce no new matter, and their entry is respectfully requested.

Based on the above amendment and the following remarks, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 12-14 and 23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being allegedly anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 4,744,550 to Oglesbee (hereinafter "Oglesbee"). Applicant respectfully traverses.

The Examiner states that because the semiconductor devices (7) are separated upon expansion of the flexible film (5) in Oglesbee, an initial stress must exist between the devices and the wafer chuck. However, Applicant respectfully points out that, contrary to the Examiner's characterization of Oglesbee, the separation of the devices explicitly illustrate that no initial stress is created by the expansion of the film. Instead, the devices merely maintain their original positional relationship with respect to the film.

In Oglesbee, a grid of semiconductor devices is placed on a flexible film. The flexible film is then stretched. This stretching acts to separate the semiconductor devices in the grid, so that each device can be individually inspected. Because the devices are separated by the same amount that the film is stretched, there is no change in any stress on an interface between the devices and the film - as the film expands, the device expands, and as the film contracts, the device contracts. Therefore, the expansion of the film in Oglesbee does not *create* an additional stress at the interface between the wafer and the wafer chuck, as recited in claim 12. In Oglesbee the devices merely maintain their positional relationship with their corresponding space on the film.

The claims, on the other hand, recite expanding the wafer chuck without a corresponding expansion of the wafer attached to the wafer chuck. That is, as the chuck expands, the wafer does not substantially expand. For example, this expansion of the chuck without a corresponding expansion of the wafer increases the friction between the wafer and the wafer chuck, thereby *creating an initial stress* at an interface between the wafer and the wafer chuck, as recited in claim 12.

Further, as illustrated in Fig. 7 of Oglesbee, even after the film has been expanded, the individual devices may still be removed from the film for inspection and replaced after the inspection is complete. Such an ability to remove and replace the devices further illustrates that the expansion in Oglesbee does not create an initial stress between the wafer and the wafer chuck, because the removal of an individual device would break the stress and negate any advantage to creating an initial stress in the first place.

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For at least these reasons, Oglesbee does not anticipate claim 12. Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 12 is patentable over Oglesbee. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 12 is respectfully requested.

Regarding claims 13 and 14, these claims are patentable over Oglesbee based on claim 12 being patentable. Further, Applicant respectfully submits that the annular groove in Oglesbee is not the same as the tubular annular ring of claims 13 and 14. However, for clarification, Applicant has amended claims 13 and 14 to recite "an annular tube" rather than "an annular ring." Applicant submits that Oglesbee does not teach or suggest use of an annular tube as part of the wafer expander. For at least these additional reasons, and for the reasons discussed with respect to claim 12, Applicant submits that claims 13 and 14 are patentable over Oglesbee. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of claims 13 and 14 is respectfully requested.

Claim 23 is patentable over Oglesbee for at least the same reasons as discussed with respect to claim 12, and further in view of its own respective features. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 23 is respectfully requested.

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Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicant believes that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment and Reply is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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